

Accompanying Research for the Special Programme of the Federal Government for the Introductory Qualification of Adolescents: EQJ Programme; Final Report

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**Accompanying Research for the
Special Programme of the Federal Government
for the Introductory Qualification of
Adolescents**

- EQJ Programme -

Commissioned by

The Federal Ministry for
Labour and Social Affairs

Final Report

GIB

This report was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

The conceptual framework for the project was developed in 2004 by the then Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA).

Neither the BMAS nor the BMWA have influenced the results of this report. The GIB as the contractor takes sole responsibility for the report.

Berlin, July 2008

**Association for Innovation Research
and Consultancy**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
2.	An Overview of the EQJ Programme	3
2.1	Targets and Target Groups for Assistance	4
2.2	The Course of Sponsorship between 2004 and 2007	4
2.3	Accompanying Programme Evaluation	5
3.	Results of the Three Programme Years	7
3.1	The Course of the EQJ Programme	7
3.2	Structure of the Supported Participants and their Development	8
3.3	Comparison to the Control Group	10
3.4	Behaviour of Participating Companies	11
4.	Evaluation of the Efficiency of EQJ Support	12
5.	Summary and Policy Recommendations	13

1. Introduction

In June 2004 the Federal Government decided together with the main business associations in Germany to form a “*National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development*”¹ for a period of three years. At that time the market for vocational training had been strained for a number of years. It was clear that for the vocational training year 2003/2004 there would be more adolescents without an apprenticeship than in the years before. In fact, on the 30th of September 2004 there were 44,576 applicants for vocational training but only 13,394 apprenticeships on offer.²

The main element of the “*National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development*” was the promise of the business associations to offer an additional 30,000 apprenticeships in each of the following three years. The achievement of this goal was to be supported through the introduction of the EQJ Programme. The representatives of the German business associations made a commitment for the duration of the pact to make 25,000 places for EQJ internships available each year. In return the Federal Government promised to compensate the participating companies for the wages and the social insurance payments for the trainees. Furthermore, it was agreed to evaluate the support measures and the effectiveness of the EQJ Programme through continuous monitoring. The then Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour advertised a European call for tenders for the evaluation of the EQJ Programme. The Association for Innovation Research and Consultancy (GIB) was selected and commissioned to evaluate the EQJ Programme over its then planned duration of three years.

During the three years of evaluating the EQJ Programme a large amount of data was collected and analysed. This data covered participating individuals, companies, economic associations, labour agencies and vocational schools. The results were compiled into six progress reports which are published on the homepage of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. They can also be obtained through GIB.³

¹ Translations of programme names use the BIBB’s collection of English terminology in the field of vocational training, which is available at <http://www.bibb.de/de/29728.htm> whenever possible.

² See the Vocational Education Report 2005, p.49.

³ The progress reports are only available in German. They are available at http://www.bmas.de/coremedia/generator/20332/2007_10_11_Begleitforschung_zum_EQJProgramm.html. One may also order directly through mail@gib-berlin.eu.

This final report summarises the central results of the EQJ Programme evaluation. Readers who are interested in more detail are advised to read the progress reports.

In March 2007 the Training Pact was extended for a further three years until 2010. In the context of the extension of the Pact, the business associations have promised to increase the number of places for EQJ internships from 25,000 to 40,000.⁴ At the same time the Federal Government has guaranteed the financial support for these 40,000 places.

⁴ See "National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development in Germany 2007-2010."

2. An Overview of the EQJ Programme

In June 2004 the “*National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development*” was concluded, specifying the main parameters of the EQJ Programme. The then Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) released the guidelines for the EQJ Programme in the following month (EQJ-Programme Guidelines - EQJR, Bundesanzeiger Nr. 145, August 5, 2004) in order to quickly react to the strained situation on the vocational training market by offering new qualification opportunities. These guidelines included specifications of the aims, content, target group, benefits and the length of the eligibility period for benefits. The knowledge and skills that participants gained through the EQJ Programme was supposed to prepare them for subsequent job training in accordance with § 25 Paragraph 1 BBiG and 25 of the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO). If the EQJ internship was conducted as a vocational training preparation, the regulations in §§ 50 to 52 of the BBiG were to apply. Vocational schooling was regulated according to the respective schooling laws of the federal states. Following successful participation in the EQJ Programme the participants were to receive a certificate from the related business chamber. If a participant of an EQJ internship was subsequently given the opportunity to start a regular apprenticeship in the same field of employment, it was possible to deduct the duration of the EQJ internship from the subsequent job training. This happened in accordance with the regulations in § 29 Paragraph 2. BBiG and § 27a Paragraph 2 HwO.⁵

Moreover, the EQJ guidelines regulated the support to the payment for EQJ interns, namely 192 € per month plus a Social Insurance contribution of 102 € (99€ since the 1st of February 2007).⁶ The support for an approved EQJ participation could be granted (in accordance with Article 5 of the EQJ Programme guidelines) for six to twelve months.

According to the BMAS, 184 Mio € from the Federal Budget were spent between 2004 and 2007 on the EQJ Programme. For the different programme years, spending was as follows: 2.1 Mio. € in 2004, 40.3 Mio. € in 2005, 69.5 Mio € in 2006 and 71.8 Mio € in 2007.⁷

⁵ See the guidelines for the implementation of the Special Programme for Introductory Qualification of Adolescents (EQJ-Programme – EQJR) from July 28, 2004, Article 2 Paragraph 1, Paragraph 4, Paragraph 6 and Paragraph 7.

⁶ See the guidelines for the implementation of the Special Programme for Introductory Qualification of Adolescents (EQJ-Programme – EQJR) from July 28, 2004, and in the form from January 12, 2007, respectively Article 4, Paragraph 1.

⁷ See the guidelines for the implementation of the Special Programme for Introductory Qualification of Adolescents (EQJ-Programme – EQJR) from July 28, 2004, Article 5 Paragraph 1.

2.1 Targets and Target Groups of the Sponsorship

The Training Pact stated that the EQJ Programme should give adolescents with limited chances of finding a vocational job training placement an opportunity to obtain job training and enter the labour market. The Guidelines of the EQJ Programme specified the following target groups:

- Job training applicants who, due to individual reasons, have limited perspectives for obtaining a placement and who could not be placed in the “Nachvermittlungsaktion”⁸ of the relevant year.
- Adolescents who do not have the full abilities needed for entering vocational job training.⁹

For both target groups support could only be given to persons who were not older than 25 years.

Article 1 Paragraph 1 and Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the programme guidelines stated that the EQJ Programme was aimed at providing a “bridge” to a regular vocational training placement.

2.2 The Course of Sponsorship between 2004 and 2007

The EQJ Programme was accepted and used to a great extent by both adolescents and companies. This can be seen through the high number of offered EQJ internships, the large number of participating adolescents as well as the number of companies participating in the programme.

The goal to provide 25,000 places for EQJ internships was more than fulfilled already in the initial year of the programme. By December 2004, 31,500 places had been offered by participating companies.¹⁰ In 2005 there was a considerable increase, so that by the middle of January 2006 nearly 42,000 places were provided.¹¹ In the third year of the programme, the aim was once again overachieved. Companies provided 42,000 places by the middle of January 2007.¹²

⁸ The “Nachvermittlungsaktion” is one of the elements of the above mentioned *National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development*. It is a joint effort of business associations and labour agencies in order to arrange subsequent placement for those adolescents who have not found an apprenticeship or employment several months after the end of schooling.

⁹ See the guidelines for the implementation of the Special Programme for Introductory Qualification of Adolescents (EQJ-Programme – EQJR) from July 28, 2004, Article 3 Paragraph 1.

¹⁰ See the Vocational Education Report 2005, p.11.

¹¹ See the Vocational Education Report 2006, p.25

¹² See the Vocational Education Report 2007, p.15

In the first year of the programme (2004/2005), 17,768 adolescents started an EQJ internship. In the following year the number of participants nearly doubled (to 32,107 participants in 2005/2006). In the third year of the programme the number increased once again, totalling 37,576 new entries into the programme.¹³

The results of the evaluation study show that in the vocational training year 2004/2005 about 11,600 companies participated in the EQJ Programme. This figure increased to around 13,350 in the second programme year and to around 31,300 in the third.¹⁴ The sharp increase in participating companies in the third programme year is due to the fact that, more frequently than in the first two years, only one EQJ place was offered per company. This corresponds to the rising share of small businesses with up to 25 employees among the participating companies. While in the first year the portion of such businesses amounted to three quarters, the rate rose to over 80% in the third programme year.

2.3 Accompanying Programme Evaluation

The evaluation of the EQJ Programme for the BMWA (since November 2005 BMAS) started in December 2004. The central aim of the evaluation was the timely investigation whether and to what extent the targets of the programme had been attained. Moreover, its aim was to identify problems and to suggest possible improvements.

The accompanying Programme Evaluation was carried out by surveying EQJ participants, companies, labour agencies, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of skilled crafts as well as vocational schools. Thereby, the focus was on companies offering EQJ internships. Surveys among labour agencies, chambers and vocational schools concentrated on the institutions' experience with organizing and managing EQJ internships.

The surveys among adolescents and companies were carried out immediately after the end of each programme year. Besides the EQJ participants the evaluation also included surveys among adolescents who had similar characteristics as the EQJ participants, but did not receive any support or were supported within a different programme. This control group was used in order to isolate the effects of support through the EQJ Programme.

¹³ Statistic of the Federal Labour Agency from January 7, 2008

¹⁴ The company figures are based on the number of entries into the EQJ Programme and on the average number of EQJ participants per company (2004/2005 1.53; 2005/2006 2.4; 2006/2007 1.2).

A subgroup of the EQJ participants were questioned several times (in October 2005, 2006 and 2007) in order to get information of the long term effects of the support. The following table gives an overview of the surveyed EQJ participants as well as the adolescents in the control group.

Net Size (Programme Year)		Survey 2005	Survey 2006	Survey 2007
1. Cohort (October 2004 to April 2005)	Participants	750	375	277
	Control group	750	375	166
2. Cohort (October 2005 to April 2006)	Participants		750	375
	Control group		750	365
3. Cohort (October 2006 to April 2007)	Participants			750
	Control group			750

Table 1

The described survey method enables a cross section (comparison of three cohorts directly after the end of the EQJ internship) as well as a longitudinal analysis (state of development of the adolescents of one cohort, one to two years after the end of the EQJ internship).

The survey of companies was carried out in the same annual rhythm. Due to the sharp rise in the number of companies that offered EQJ placements and due to random sampling it was only rarely possible to question a company more than once. The response level increased steadily over the three programme years. After the first programme year the response level came to 341 filled out questionnaires while one year later it increased to 435. For the last survey, which was carried out in October 2007, the response level of filled out questionnaires amounted to 529.

The labour agencies were surveyed twice. The first time was in December 2005/January 2006. 77 labour agencies returned filled out questionnaires. In the second survey in March 2007, 83 agencies of labour returned a questionnaire.

3. Results of the three Programme Years

The following paragraphs summarise the most important findings of the evaluation study for the three programme years 2004/2005, 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.

3.1 The Course of the EQJ Programme

The participants of the EQJ Programme became aware of the offered places through various ways. The most important source of information was the job information centre within the labour agencies through which 51.4% of the adolescents were informed about internships on offer. Very frequently, the adolescents became active themselves and asked companies for an internship directly (41.1% of the participants). 38.4 % of the adolescents were informed about internships through friends and family members. Another 33.4% were informed through the providers of municipal services.

For nearly two thirds of the participants, the EQJ internship was close to the job they eventually wanted to do. A further 27.3% of the surveyed participants stated that their EQJ internship was related or very close to the job they actually wanted to do.

The regulations concerning the obligation of the participating adolescents to attend vocational schooling were not affected by the programme. This was due to the fact that responsibility for these regulations remained with the federal states. Consequently, in some of the federal states there was an obligation for EQJ participants to visit vocational schools during the programme, while in other federal states they were exempt. The proportion of participants attending vocational schools rose steadily over the programme years. In the first programme year it was 38.3%, in the second programme year 45.2% and in the third year 49.4%.

More than half of the adolescents who took part in the EQJ Programme received neither a letter of reference from the company nor a certificate from the business chamber. An examination of the individual programme years shows that this share increased slightly.

About one fifth of the adolescents claimed that they left the EQJ Programme before the regular end of their internship. However, this quota declined over the programme years. In a large portion of these cases, however, termination should be seen as an early achievement of the objectives rather than a problematic programme termination. More than 40% of the adolescents terminating their internship earlier than planned,

stated that they had done so because they had found a regular job training placement. Similarly, many adolescents claimed that they had found another employment. Only in a small number of cases adolescents terminated their internship prematurely due to personal conflicts with other employees or due to the low pay.

Cases of abuse (in the sense of companies using trainees merely as a cheap labour force) were very rare (about 2%).

3.2 Structure of the supported Participants and their Development

In order to determine whether the target groups of the programme were reached, it was important to find out about the characteristics of the EQJ participants. It turned out that nearly every second EQJ participant had no school degree or at most a degree from a “Hauptschule”. In every programme year about one third of all participants had a migration background, i.e. they were not born in Germany, had at least one parent that did not originate from Germany or had no German nationality. Adolescents fulfilling at least one of these criteria can be seen as disadvantaged persons as it is comparatively difficult for these groups to find places for regular job training.¹⁵ Consequently, they can be considered as belonging to the target group. The results of the evaluation have shown that this group of adolescents accounted for nearly two thirds of all EQJ participants. Moreover, there exists an array of individual placement constraints (such as limited mobility) which were not systematically recorded in the context of the surveys (i.e. data was not collected). Therefore, it may be concluded that at least two thirds (and probably more) of the participating adolescents had individual placement constraints.

The overall proportion of disabled adolescents among the participants was low. The average of all cohorts came to less than 2%. A high proportion of the surveyed labour agencies claimed that the offer of places fitting to the needs of people with disabilities was low and the placement of this target group was difficult.

Besides the adolescents with identifiable individual placement constraints there were also EQJ participants for which no individual placement constraints could be identified from the available data. About 20% of the EQJ participants possessed a degree from a “Realschule” or some higher

¹⁵ See the Vocational Education Report of 2005 and 2006 as well as the literature and the progress reports of the EQJ Programme.

degree, had no migration background, were younger than 20 and did not belong to the group of applicants who did not find a placement in the previous year. However, as mentioned before it is possible that these EQJ participants also had individual placement constraints which could not be identified from the existing data (e.g. lack of mobility).

An important aspect of the evaluation was the assessment of the transition into regular vocational training after the EQJ internship. During the three programme years the transition rate rose steadily. While it was around 56.5% (for transition into vocational training in a company) and 65.6% (transition into any sort of vocational training, including extra-company training) in the first year, it rose to 62.4% and 69.7% in the second year and 65.5% and 74.7% in the third programme year.

Within the group of adolescents with identifiable individual placement constraints, namely those with no school degree or at most a degree from a “Hauptschule” and those with a migration background, the transition rate was slightly lower. Out of this group 53.2% (63.3%) began vocational training in a company directly after the internship in the first programme year. In the following year this rate rose up to 59.9% (66.4%) and finally to 63.4% (72.5%). If one considers adolescents with a migration background one finds similar transition rates as among those without a migration background. The (small) differences between the group of adolescents with individual placement constraints and those without were mainly due to different school degrees.

The transition rate and the increase in this rate underline the effectiveness of the implementation of the EQJ Programme. The steady rise is probably due to an increasingly efficient selection process through both labour agencies and participating companies.

Considering the sustainability of the EQJ Programme one can see that the participants of the first programme year who were surveyed in all three programme years also showed increasing transition rates, even though the rate of increase was small. Starting from 56.3% (65.0%) the proportion of adolescents being in vocational training rose to 61.4% (68.6%) in the following year and remained virtually unchanged in the next year at about 61.4% (69.3%).¹⁶

¹⁶ The longitudinal analysis includes only those adolescents who were actually surveyed several times. As this applies only to the portion of the adolescents who were surveyed after the end of their EQJ measure it is possible that there are minor differences between the cross-over figures for the relevant cohort in this report and the figures in earlier progress reports. The same applies for the control groups.

Altogether, about 40% of the participating adolescents had identifiable individual placement constraints *and* reached the programme goal of transition into vocational training directly after the EQJ internship.

Many of the EQJ participants started vocational training in the company where they had completed their EQJ internship. According to the surveyed companies, in the third programme year 56.5% of the participating companies offered at least one EQJ participant an apprenticeship (53.1%) and/or regular employment (4%). The proportion was similar for the first two programme years. In all three programme years three quarters of the adolescents who started vocational training did so in the same occupation in which they had done their EQJ internship.

3.3 Comparison to the Control Group

In order to evaluate the integration effect due to the EQJ Programme, the survey did not only include EQJ participants, but also a control group of adolescents (with otherwise comparable characteristics) who did not participate in the programme.

Concerning the transition rates, there was a substantial difference between the EQJ participants and the adolescents of the control group, especially in the first programme year. Whereas 56.5% (65.6%) of the EQJ participants had started vocational training in the year after the internship, only 18% (28.9%) of the adolescents of the control group had a vocational training position at the same time. In the course of the programme the transition rate of the adolescents in the control group rose strongly. However, it did not reach the same high level as among EQJ participants. In the second programme year 29.7% (38.7%) of the adolescents of the control group had started vocational training and in the following year this rate rose to 46.0% (59.2%). This seems to be due to the general economic development, as the overall number of available apprenticeships grew during that time.

Evaluated separately, the adolescents in the control group with identifiable individual placement constraints reached similarly high transition rates as the whole control group: 16% (25%) in the first programme, 28% (36%) in the second programme year and 43% (56.5%) in the third programme year.

An analysis of the adolescents in the control group for the first programme year indicates a strong rise in transition rates into apprenticeships over the three years of the programme. Whereas in October 2005 the transition rates of the adolescents of the control group were still 40% below those of

the first year EQJ participants, two years later the difference between both groups had shrunk to 7%. For the group of adolescents entering vocational training in a company, the difference between the rates was somewhat lower (from a 43% difference to a 17% difference). Overall, the development of the transition rate for adolescents with individual placement constraints was similar. This indicates that the impact of the programme on the transition into vocational training declined over time. Over the years, age and school degree become relatively more important.¹⁷

The comparison of the development of the adolescents who participated in the EQJ Programme and those in the control group highlights once again the importance of the general economic development, which was probably one of the main reasons for the increase in transition rates.

3.4 Behavior of Participating Companies

The declared common goal of the partners in the “*National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development*” was, in close cooperation with the federal states, to offer all adolescents who were willing and able to enter vocational training the possibility to do so. Therefore, placement in the regular vocational training system, especially for those adolescents having individual placement constraints was of primary importance.

In addition to those companies who already had experience with vocational training, there were also companies that participated in the EQJ Programme which had no prior experience with vocational training. The proportion of these companies among all companies participating in the EQJ programme was around 20% in the first programme year. This share decreased slightly in the third programme year. About one third of those companies offered vocational training for the first time after having offered an EQJ internship. Nine out of ten companies who started offering vocational training offered a position to their former EQJ intern.

Concerning a possible squeeze-out effect, in the sense that companies reduce their vocational training activities by substituting regular apprenticeships by EQJ internships, such an effect was visible in 30% of the participating companies within the first programme year. In the course

¹⁷ See here GIB (2006): Accompanying Research of the Special Programme of the Federal Government for Introductory Qualification of Adolescents – EQJ-Programme – 6. Progress Report, Chapter 5.2.2.

of the EQJ Programme this proportion decreased steadily. About half of the companies regularly offering training increased their vocational training activity. According to the companies, the average number of their trainees had increased by the end of each programme year compared to the previous year. That indicates that there had been a rise in the number of vocational training places, through which the squeeze-out effect could be compensated.

4. Evaluation of the Efficiency of EQJ Support

In each of the three completed programme years two thirds of the questioned EQJ participants entered vocational training directly after the end of their EQJ internship. Extrapolating to all participants of the EQJ Programme, one may estimate the following numbers of entries into vocational training: in 2005 an estimated 11,500 participants entered vocational training, in 2006 22,000 and in 2007 about 28,000.¹⁸

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the EQJ Programme it is useful to explain the differences between the participating adolescents and those in the control group in more detail.

During the EQJ Programme participating adolescents acquired specific knowledge and skills that were relevant for employment. Moreover, in contrast to the adolescents in the control group who were supported differently or not at all, they had obtained more expert knowledge. This qualification effect was very likely to be a major factor for the higher crossover rate into vocational training relative to the control group. The high proportion of adolescents who started their vocational training in the company where they had previously done their EQJ internship shows that the goal of the EQJ Programme, namely to act as bridge into vocational training, was achieved to a high degree.

¹⁸ The estimation is derived by combining the number of participants with the results from the survey (see Chapter 3.2).

5. Summary and Policy Recommendations

The evaluation of the EQJ Programme is based on surveys of:

- Adolescents who completed an EQJ internship and adolescents of a control group who were supported differently or not at all,
- Companies that participated in the EQJ Programme by offering places for an internship,
- Labour agencies, Chambers of Industry, Commerce, and Crafts, and Vocational Schools.

In all three programme years, the adolescents who took part in the EQJ programme experienced higher transition rates into vocational training than those in the respective control group. The transition rates of the EQJ participants rose only slightly, whereas that of the control groups grew strongly. However, the latter never reached the high level of the group of EQJ participants.

Two thirds of the EQJ participants belonged to the target group of adolescents who had identifiable individual placement constraints whereas the others had no placement constraints or they were not identifiable from the available data. About two thirds of the adolescents who belonged to the target group of the programme due to their placement constraints were able to enter into an apprenticeship after the internship.

About half of all EQJ participants visited a vocational school during their EQJ internship. This is mainly due to state-specific regulations on vocational schooling.

The option to deduct the duration of the EQJ internship from the subsequent vocational training has not become standard practice. This is partly due to the previously mentioned differences between the federal states concerning the obligation to visit vocational schools. Only about 20% of the surveyed adolescents claimed that their EQJ internship would be formally recognized as part of their vocational education.

A deficit in the programme was the issuing of certificates through the related business chambers after completion of EQJ internships. This was mainly due to fact that participating adolescents and companies did not file an appropriate application.

Any squeeze-out effects with regard to vocational training places caused through the EQJ Programme could be overcompensated through a rise in

training activities in both training companies and those companies which had not previously offered places for vocational training. The latter companies frequently started offering vocational training by providing an apprenticeship to their former EQJ interns.

According to the labour agencies there were cases of misuse during the three programme years. However, these were very few, accounting for only 2% of the EQJ participants per year.

The following recommendations can be drawn out of the evaluation, which ran parallel to the three years of the EQJ Programme:

- About one third of the adolescents who participated in the EQJ Programme had no obvious individual placement constraints or these constraints could not be identified from the available data.

With regard to the above facts it is advisable to re-evaluate the currently used placement procedure in order to sponsor the target groups in an even more systematic way. For example, this could be done through a clarification of the EQJ placement criteria in the respective guidelines.

- In a high number of cases no letter of reference or certificate was awarded to the participants at the end of their EQJ internships.

It is advisable to foster the issue of certificates through the relevant chambers to ease the transition into vocational training and work. It may be advisable to send a standardised letter of information to the participating adolescents and companies prior to the end of their EQJ internship to remind them of the opportunity of certification. It should be considered to enclose a pre-printed form that could be used by the relevant chamber for producing the certificate.

- The high transition rates into vocational training following EQJ internships indicate a high target achievement by the EQJ Programme.

The aim should be to increase the consistency of support through the EQJ Programme. An important step that has already been achieved in this direction is the inclusion of the EQJ programme in the catalogue of instruments in the work promotion legislation since October 1st, 2007.

Furthermore, it is advised to evaluate the influence that the general situation of the training and labour markets has on the rate of adolescents that enter vocational training after completion of their EQJ internship. This would be helpful in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the EQJ Programme under a changing economic environment. It is therefore suggested to implement a continuous evaluation of the EQJ Programme resp. the Introductory Qualification according to work promotion law.